

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,  
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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**Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays**  
**October 29, 2003**

Let me first thank Congressman Mike Turner for inviting the Subcommittee to Dayton today, and for his thoughtful, diligent service as our Vice Chairman every day. His experience, his insight and his candor have added invaluable to our oversight. Obviously, when it comes to reforming government, this is no freshman.

We convene here because, as former Mayor Turner won't stop reminding us, everything and everyone in the world has some connection to Dayton. As the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina know, what happens here can have international, even global, implications.

The apparently local issue at hand is an Army subcontract for treatment and release of byproducts from the destruction of the chemical weapon VX. But what this community has experienced in the implementation of that contract will have a profound impact on how the United States conducts the process of meeting international treaty obligations for the destruction of VX stockpiles under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

That process, pursued through Army contractors, makes local disposal of the VX dissolution byproduct, hydrolysate, specifically “contingent upon the establishment and maintenance of public acceptance.” The contract requires detailed, sustained and successful public outreach to build and maintain that acceptance; as it should.

The necessary and noble enterprise of ridding the world of dreaded chemical weapons should not terrorize the localities involved with technical jargon and vaguely characterized environmental risks. Civic understanding and approval are indispensable elements of this effort. Public confidence should not be diluted or destroyed with the VX.

But the Army at times has appeared to forget, or regret, the critical public outreach and acceptance elements of the agreement. Alternately attempting to ritualize, minimize or altogether shift responsibility for civic involvement, the government and its contractors have succeeded only in galvanizing public anxiety and opposition to the VX hydrolysate disposal plan.

If only as a cautionary tale how not to forge a required popular consensus, testimony today will be of significant value as the federal government, states and localities pursue the important and challenging public business of chemical disarmament.

On behalf of our Members, all of whom will receive a complete transcript of today’s proceedings, we welcome our witnesses and guests to this hearing. We look forward to a frank discussion of this community’s experience and the lessons Dayton holds for the national chemical weapons demilitarization program.